

In a paper entitled "Notes on the *Mimidæ* of Jamaica, by Richard Hill," which immediately follows Professor Baird's, Mr. Hill attempts to show that the *Mimus hillii* above referred to is the true *Turdus orpheus* of Linnæus, and that the Common Mocking-bird of Jamaica is the true *Turdus polyglottus* of Linnæus. If this be so, the well-known North American species must take some other appellation.

Mr. H. Bryant publishes, in the 'Proceedings of the Boston Natural History Society'*, some "Remarks on the Genus *Galeoscoptes*, Cabanis, with the characters of two new Genera, and a description of *Turdus plumbeus*, Linn." It would appear that the true *Turdus plumbeus* of Linnæus (founded upon Catesby's description)[†] is quite distinct from the *Turdus ardosiaceus* of Vieillot, of Porto Rico and St. Domingo: Mr. Bryant even makes a distinct genus of it, which he calls *Mimokitta*! But we are rather inclined to agree with Professor Baird, who (*in litt.*) arranges this little section of Thrush-like Mockers of the Antilles as forming four species of *Mimocichla*, as follows:—

1. *M. plumbea*, ex ins. Bahamens.
 2. *M. ardesiaca*, ex St. Domingo.
 3. *M. schistacea*, Baird, sp. nov., ex Cuba.
 4. *M. rubripes*, ex Cuba.
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XXXIV.—*Letters, Extracts from Correspondence, Notices, &c.*

WE have received the following letters addressed "To the Editor":—

Villa Laurenti, Mentone, France.

SIR,—The migratory birds have already, by their arrival, reminded me of the year that has passed without my sending you such notes as I may have gathered together in the interim.

I must therefore ask your leave to return in imagination to January 4th of the past year (1863), from which time my jottings recommence. On that day I was passing, with my brother, through the lemon-terraces which clothe the warm hill-sides

* Proc. Boston Soc. N. H., Dec. 16th, 1863.

towards Pont St. Louis, and saw a single Wryneck (*Yunx torquilla*) worming its way among the leaves, with its peculiar side-long motion and well-marked brown-striped back. I have never again seen this bird as a winter resident, unless I should allow one example which I observed, last October (25th), to rank as such. Throughout the early spring (1863) the Black Wheatear paid us many visits, being excluded from its wilder haunts by repeated falls of snow. Perhaps we owe to the same cause the passage of a flight of birds of the Crow family, on January 18th. Their general appearance was that of Red-legged Crows (*Pyrrhocorax graculus*), but they may perhaps have been no other than the Alpine Crows themselves (*P. pyrrhocorax*). They did not alight, but passed determinedly over our heads in a S.W. direction. During this month I frequently saw the Rock Creeper (*Tichodroma phænicoptera*), and on one occasion, (January 20th), when driving through the town of Ventimiglia, perceived one of them climbing most composedly the dirt-crueted walls of a many-storied Italian house. This gay street-bird, dressed in crimson and grey, was but a few yards from a dismal little window, out of which, at any minute, curious eyes might have cast hungry glances on the brilliant visitor. I last saw the *Tichodroma* on March 14th, 1863, the individual being a fine male bird with his newly acquired jet-black throat. After this date I believe that they leave the coast, and seek their breeding-places among the mountains. Throughout the year I did not see any really early migrants, my notes giving the following:— One female Black Cap, January 23rd; Swallows, April 1st; Redstart (*Ruticilla phænicura*), April 4th; Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*), April 19th; Swifts (*Cypselus apus*), April 28th. As for the Hoopoes, I did not notice one till quite the middle of April, though they are in reality the earliest of our visitors, bearing the local name “Le Coq de Mars.” As the spring advanced, I saw among the intricacies of the lemon, orange, and olive trees many insect-hunting birds of colours and forms new to me; and, were it not that the mere transitory glimpses obtained form no admissible evidence, I might have been tempted to recount some of the wild-goose chases on which I have so often been led. I shall only, however, venture to represent two occasions on which,

in either case, I had at least a song for my pains. (1.) I must ask you to imagine a very hot April afternoon, heated by an Italian in place of an English sun. The steep hill-side on which I am affords shade and sunlight, moist places, and baked and crumbling earth. We have here no beech-leaves, blue-bells, or wood-anemonies, but, instead, fir-needles, brown serapias lolling out thirsty tongues, gaunt limodorums, leafless and straight, and on the shady banks graceful creamy-white orchises (*Orchis provincialis*) with their purple-spotted leaves prostrate in adoration. I, too, am dreamily filled with a vague reverence, and, while engaged in an attempt to adjust the respective claims of sun-lovers and shade-lovers among plants, am startled by a call-note ringing out from the misty grey of the olive-trees above me. Soon a conversation is established, and chattering and gurgling bird-voices question and respond; and while I am creeping forward, rich-toned throats send out their great thankful roll, which, with a much-added volume, has the beauty of those few notes given out by a Thrush before the song overpowers him, and his utterance is choked with the rapidity of varying melody. The display is but limited, and soon they perceive danger, and one by one slink away through the tree-tops, vanishing so cleverly that I only get one glimpse of the flashing gold and black plumage of the Oriole! I was very much struck by the foreign ring of their dialect, the sound being rather such as one might expect to reach one from the steamy atmosphere of some tropical thicket tangled with ipomæas, than out of the pale shade of gnarled olive-trees, of which the only permitted encumbrance are the soft green tendrils of some scrambling vine. I may notice here that, during the three winters passed by me at Mentone, I have always remarked the subdued voices of Song-Thrushes and Blackbirds in these parts. They never venture to burst into the free singing so well remembered in our English spring-times. I suppose they fear the presence of the chasseur, and dare not utter their devotions above their breath, unless, indeed, they may perhaps find solitude in some mountain pine-wood where they may fly and sing in safety, as in the fastnesses of the wild rocks the persecuted Rock-Thrush pours out a wild thanksgiving, free and unrestrained. (2.) Once more, I should like to

ask your leave to describe another and a less satisfactory pursuit, in case the faint indications I am able to give of the strange song heard may suggest some reflections on European warblers and their varied powers. The 1st of May, 1863, ended in a lovely still evening, tempting the dusty world to come and enjoy the approaching cool. About half-past five I made my way to a neighbouring valley with my sister. The sea on our left was almost motionless as we passed, and far out over its glassy surface multitudes of Swallows were skimming, employed as busily as if they were among the gnats haunting some inland water.

The valley was soon reached, and there insect-life seemed at its full, as the armies of day *Ephemera* whirled and eddied in company with the earliest of the night-fliers. The soft bills of the *Sylviadæ* were feebly snapping in all directions, and the variety of these birds was at once confusing and full of excitement. Suddenly I was startled by a call closely imitative of the best notes of the Oriole, which quickly changed into weak piping trills, and then once again to a long succession of melancholy whistling cadences producing a strange weird effect, totally un-English. These latter sounds were so unbird-like, that on re-joining my sister I found her fully convinced that I had attempted to attract the stranger by luring his attention with a varied whistle. I certainly thought that the bird must have been a mocker, and I much regret that the thick masses of lemon-leaves baffled all my attempts to gain any view of the songster. May 5th, 1863, has a very pleasant memory attached to it for me, as on that day I was surrounded by a flight of Bee-eaters, all playing their airy antics overhead. These birds proclaim their coming from afar by constant piping cries, and are quite unmis-takeable when seen near; their curiously curved bills, bright colours, and finely pointed tails giving them an appearance to which I can make no comparison. Their voices quite fill the air, and the stranger has only to listen for a sound very similar to that uttered by a flock of chickens, but coming from ever-changing distances with a deceitful enchantment like the song of Ariel. It was also in the beginning of May that I saw a Spotted Cuckoo (*Cuculus glandarius*); but I heard no cry, and can only state that the bird has some general resemblance to a

Magpie, the slender shape and habit of jerking its tail perhaps contributing to give it this likeness.

Before I close this list of reminiscences, I must mention that I saw my first Swallow (*Hirundo urbica*), this year, on March 19th, since which date they have become very abundant. I also saw a Hoopoe on March 9th, thus proving its title to be called a "March fowl."

Yours &c., J. TRAHERNE MOGGRIDGE.

15 St. James's Square, London,
May 1st, 1864.

SIR,—I am able, from my own observation, to add the Collared Turtle (*Turtur risorius*) to the list of European birds (in which, I see, it is not included by Professor Blasius), having met with it at Constantinople last April. My first introduction to this species took place at Smyrna, where I stayed a few days *en route* from Egypt to Constantinople. I there found these Doves in considerable numbers among the cypress-trees growing in the Turkish cemeteries in the vicinity of the city. I was certainly rather surprised at meeting with a bird of strong flight and wide geographical range, like a Turtle Dove, of a species hitherto excluded from the European list, at Smyrna, so near the political rather than geographical boundary which divides the Greek from the Asiatic islands. On arriving at Constantinople, I again met with a few pairs of my friends, *Turtur risorius*, among the cypress trees of the seraglio-gardens in Stamboul. Thus I consider that this species is fully entitled to a place in the list of European birds.

I do not think it would be possible for any *accurate observer* to mistake either *Turtur auritus* or *T. aegyptiacus* for this species, as Mr. C. A. Wright suggests (*Ibis*, 1864, p. 139) Mr. E. Newton did; neither can I agree with Mr. Wright that *Turtur risorius* does not usually appear so far north as the Mediterranean, since at least half the area of that sea lies below the meridian of Smyrna, at which place I ascertained that *T. risorius* is a regular visitant. I have no doubt that this species is the parent stock from which those pale isabel-coloured Doves with a black collar, so commonly kept in cages, are derived.

I am, Sir, yours &c., E. CAVENDISH TAYLOR.

SIR,—In the ‘Ibis,’ p. 124, *anteà*, it is remarked that “the true *Bucconidæ* and *Capitonidæ* are very distinct families,” and that “these groups differ not only in external form, but also in internal structure and in habits. The error of uniting them was *first pointed out* by Dr. Cabanis, and has since been commented upon by Professor Burmeister, by ourselves, by Mr. Wallace, and by other writers. The *Capitonidæ* are closely allied to the Toucans in habits and structure. Like them, they have but ten tail-feathers, and the furcula imperfect at the junction of the rami. The *Bucconidæ*, on the other hand, are essentially allied to the Trogons and Jacamars, with which indeed they are united by Burmeister into one family.”

I am not aware of the date of Dr. Cabanis’s remarks upon the subject, but have myself expressed any time within the last thirty years the same opinion, and in print so long ago as 1838, in the old ‘Magazine of Natural History,’ n. s., when edited by Charlesworth (vol. ii. p. 317). It is true that I there designated the families *Bucconidæ* and *Tamatiadæ*; but the Green Barbets were then generally considered to exemplify typical *Bucco*. I think, too, that I was the first to point out the affinity between the *Capitonidæ* and the *Rhamphastidæ*, which observation I made upon dissecting my first Barbet, about the second day of my holding charge of the Calcutta Museum in 1841. In 1838 or 1839 I further pointed out that in the *Musophagidæ* also the clavicles do not unite—at least as a general rule; for I have since ascertained that they do so occasionally. The genus *Colius* I have never yet had the opportunity of examining, except externally; but *Chizærhis* approximates, it very closely in shape of bill and feet, and even colouring of plumage, differing chiefly in the form of the tail; and perhaps the Madagascar genus *Coua* may prove, upon anatomical examination, to appertain to the *Musophagidæ*. The habits of the *Bucconidæ*, or “Puff-birds,” are well described in Swainson’s ‘Zoological Illustrations’; and I approximate to these birds the Madagascar genus *Leptosomus*, with its twelve tail-feathers, and the genus *Indicator* to the *Picidæ*; so that the Cuculine series, as I recognize it, presents no instance of more than ten rectrices, the *Crotophagæ* having only eight. I have but slightly modified my opinion of the respective affinities and

classification of the non-Passerine *Insessores* since the year 1838.

The last two numbers of the 'Ibis' elicit the following remarks :—

Page 17. *Suya gracilis*; *Prinia gracilis*, Rüppell. Examination of Nubian specimens has convinced me that this species is undistinguishable from my *S. lepida* of India.

Page 23. Nubian Sparrows also are absolutely undistinguishable from the so-called *Passer indicus*.

Page 57. The *Hirundo rufula* of Africa is not the *H. daurica* of Asia, although the two species are nearly akin.

Page 63. So far as I have seen, the sexes of all Orioles, when fully mature, are alike in plumage, excepting that the females are not quite so vividly coloured as the males. What are commonly mistaken for the females are the young of either sex; and some females breed before attaining their final colouring. I have shot the female of *Lanius collurio*, with ova far advanced, in the finest masculine plumage; and another individual in partially masculine attire, not in moult, but having assumed an intermediate livery to the ordinary plumage of the two sexes.

Page 105. *Pitta cyanoptera* inhabits also Arakan and the Tenasserim Provinces; probably, likewise, the Indo-Chinese territories generally. Occasionally an individual occurs with a particularly large bill, and upon one of these a species has been sought to be founded.

Page 110. The *Pitta* genus is scarcely Himalayan; and, to be very correct, I should rather say *from the base of* "the Himálayas to Ceylon."

Page 180. My friend Col. Tickell seems indisposed to believe that *Buceros albirostris* inhabits Bengal. It is the only species which is not uncommonly brought alive to Calcutta; and it abounds in Eastern Bengal, Nipal, and in Assam. I likewise obtained it in the Midnapore jungles, where it meets the *B. pica* (vel *malabaricus*), which extends throughout the Indian peninsula and Ceylon. In the Deyra Doon the *B. affinis* occurs, being like *B. albirostris* in colouring and form of casque, but as large as *B. pica*; and in the Malayan region the *B. (convexus)* with the form and small size of *B. albirostris*, but the entirely white four pairs of outer tail-feathers of *B. pica*.—E. BLYTH.

Formosa, March 7th, 1864.

SIR,—On a voyage to China overland from England *vid* France and Egypt, one makes such a hurried transit through the various interesting countries, that not much time is left for ornithological observations. A few incidents and occurrences, however, I have jotted down, which may prove of some interest.

Between Marseilles and Malta, when eighty miles from the latter place, the weather being calm, two male Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*, L.) and two Robins (*Erithacus rubecula*) came on board the steamer, and stayed a short time; they were evidently on their passage across from Europe to the African coast. Between Malta and Alexandria, about 100 miles off the African shore, a Gold-crest (*Regulus cristatus*) came on board. The weather was then also calm; so that this little fellow must have been making a long sea-journey with some intended object. His appearance was so sudden that I could not tell from what direction he came. If a short-winged creature, like a typical *Regulus*, can venture with confidence so far out to sea, no wonder that its long-winged ally, the *Reguloides modestus*, Gould, should turn up in such improbable latitudes.

At Cairo we did the sights on donkey-back, as every Englishman does, and, among other "lions," went to see the Pacha's gardens on the banks of the Nile. In these prettily laid-out grounds a very small portion was devoted to zoology. The menagerie contained a female Hyena and two cubs, a few Ragged Pheasants (*P. colchicus*), a hen Silver Pheasant (*Euplocamus nycthemerus*), and some domestic poultry. The attendants assured us it was only a commencement. This we could plainly see ourselves; but, at all events, it shows a taste in the right direction, and we may hope for improvement. Our run from Alexandria to Cairo was so hurried that I had not time to note many birds. Kites were floating on lazy wing over Alexandria, and were continually seen about the Nile. They were, I presume, the species known as *Milvus ater*, but in scream and manner were very similar to our Chinese friend. About the marshes near Alexandria there was an abundance of small water-fowl (27th October), of which the only bird that particularly attracted my attention was a Black-breasted Plover seen singly or in small parties.

The Nile, with its glowing sunsets, its squalid mud huts, with tall graceful date-palms rising against the sky, is quite the Nile of pictures, but washed with dust and dirt. The men are squalid in the extreme, usually with one eye, the other sunk in its socket and exuding moisture, affording attraction to the numerous flies that appear at all seasons to throng the air—an abundant remnant of the Mosaic plague which was brought in judgment on Pharaoh and his followers. The women do well to hide their faces beneath the Yashmac cloth, and to bare their legs, the latter being far the more gainly of the two. Several Red-breasted Swallows (*Hirundo rufa*) were sporting about a mud-heap at Cairo. Many naturalists consider these a variety of *H. domestica*; but surely they are more markedly distinct from that species than are the several variations of the Black Kite group and other closely allied forms from one another. Besides the date-palms, two other characteristic trees of Egypt, which are found everywhere about Cairo, and which form an umbrageous avenue along the pleasantest road on the banks of the Nile, are a species of *Ficus* allied to the Indian banyan, with large fruit, and a species of *Acacia* with long leguminous pods.

We rattled quickly down about two-thirds the length of the Red Sea, when a hard breeze met us from the contrary direction. A few Sand-Martins (*Cotyle riparia*) then made their appearance, and followed the ship for a day or two. In passing the Straits of Babelmandel *Sulæ*, *Lari*, and *Sternæ* were abundant, as also on the Arabian coast near Aden. We arrived at Aden at dark, and left again before daylight. The next day (5th November) a few Swallows (*Hirundo domestica*) followed the ship, apparently bound for the Indian coast. On the 7th and 8th a small Goat-sucker (*Caprimulgus asiaticus*) kept about the ship. The sky was cloudless, and the breeze very light.

9th November, 200 miles off Bombay. Afternoon; little breeze. Ship going ten knots. Sea leaden grey, the ship throwing purple shadows on the westward side. Flying-fish rise all round in parties, and splash again into the water, like stones thrown from the ship. The largest fly the furthest, raising their wings high over their heads, and bending their tails down towards the water; some dash askew. Four or five Tropic Birds (*Phaëton*

candidus, Briss.) are hovering round the ship. They appear to be in winter plumage, for their tails are only four inches or so long; their bills are red. As they keep alongside the ship, they resemble Pigeons in flight, but make less strong and frequent flaps, tumbling occasionally on the wing in somewhat similar manner. One pounced head downwards, zigzag, but stopped short before touching the water, and, hovering for a second, resumed its flight.

Bombay, 10th November. Visited the Town Hall. They have there a very fine library, a small collection of Indian produce, fossils, and bits of rocks, with shells and miscellanea. I asked Mr. Bridwood, the curator and secretary, whether they possessed any specimens of local mammals or birds. He replied that they used to have them, but found that the great changes of the Bombay climate, from dry to moist heat, in a very short time quite destroyed them! He said they always sent such collections to England. I should like to know, to whom? We spent in all four days at Bombay, during which time I, of course, visited the celebrated Caves of Elephanta. The island on which they are is about six miles distant from Bombay. They are well worth visiting, though dilapidated and badly looked after. I will not bore you with a description of them, as the curious on this subject can derive more information than I have space to give here from a glance into Murray's 'Guide to India.' The chief birds observed were several Eagles (*Spi-zaëtus*, sp.), black and white, soaring over and dropping to roost among the trees of Elephanta. On the muddy shores of the island, among the scattered rocks, at low water, numbers of small yellowish-mottled, long-spined *Echini* lay sprinkled about, and much annoyed the naked feet of our native boatmen. A few Herons (*Ardea cinerea*) were stalking about. The Fan- or Palmyra Palm was the most abundant of the Palm group, as generally throughout Bombay; the Cocoa-nut next. The Dates were short and stunted, and did not seem to thrive as in Egypt. The sunset, with its vivid changes of light, closing up the panorama with a red-hot coal-like glow, was truly enchanting. The following are the notes on birds, jotted down during my rambles about the outskirts of the settlement.

Malacocircus griseus, Gmel., with light-brown plumage, dark-brown wings, fulvous rump, white eye, and yellow bill, frequenting hedges and gardens in noisy parties, flying into the latter in the early morning, and hopping about and searching for grubs among the dead leaves at the foot of bushes and at the roots of trees. They hop about with ruffled feathers, quarrel and scream in notes between those of Jays and Woodpeckers, and fly from bush to bush with roundly expanded wings and tails. They a good deal resemble the members of the *Garrulax* group, but are noisier and bolder. I learn from Jerdon (Birds of India) that some of the *Malacocirci* are fair songsters. In this respect and in form they constitute close allies of the Chinese and Formosan Song-Thrush (*Leucodioptron sinense* et *L. taëvanum*); and I cannot help thinking that these two species ought properly to be referred to *Malacocircus* instead of being isolated into a genus for themselves.

Nectarinia zeylanica, L. ♂ with resplendent purple upper parts and yellow breast; ♀ greenish. Usually in pairs, very busy about flowering bushes. They seemed to prefer the large *Hibiscus* flower, hanging about it and searching with their bills the rim of the calyx for small insects. A Crow (*Corvus splendens*) pounced upon one of them under my eyes, and carried it away in his bill, the little creature screaming in agony. Their notes call to mind at times those of Tits, at others those of White-eyes.

Milvus govinda, Sykes. The Bombay Kite looked smaller and darker than those of China. They were carrying about sticks for building with.

Corvus splendens, Vieillot. Abundant and noisy, full of tricks; also carrying about twigs.

Corvus culminatus, Sykes. Occasionally seen. Their caw, loud and peculiar, not unlike that of the Chinese Crow.

Coccytes melanoleucus, Gmel. Watched one for some time, through a glass, on a large bush. It kept flying on the leaves, and back to a perch, probably after caterpillars or spiders.

Dicrurus longicaudatus, A. Hay. Several about gardens. The only species observed. They sit bolt upright on the perch, and are light and extremely graceful on the wing, turning off occa-

sionally in flight to make a playful swoop at a passing *Malacocircus*. It sometimes slips a foot, as if about to make a false start, and suddenly checks itself. Another insect passes, and off it goes, returning to the same or another perch before swallowing its capture.

Ruticilla phaenicura, L. I feel pretty sure it was a male of this species that I saw, and not of one of its numerous allies. It has been procured from Northern India.

Merops viridis, L. It is quite a pretty sight to watch a party of these graceful creatures sporting in the sunlight. Small parties of them sit about the tops of hedges, two or three springing into the air at a time, and sailing about in different directions, making usually several captures before returning to their posts. They continue their pursuit very quietly, only occasionally uttering a short, sharp chirp.

Thamnobia fulicata, L. I watched a female searching for food on the ground. It moved about in short runs, like a Wheatear, throwing up its tail almost perpendicularly, more like a Wren than a Robin.

Lanius erythronotus, Vigors, has very similar notes to *Lanius schach* of China, but perhaps a little feebler. It is the small Indian representative of that species.

Petrocincla cyanea, L. Seen solitary, seated on walls and housetops, the same as in China.

Ixos hæmorrhous, Gmel. In notes and general habits very similar to the Chinese *Ixos chrysorrhoides*, Lafr.

Acridotheres tristis. Very like the Chinese *A. cristatellus* in notes and habits.

Iora typhia. Chatters on the sprigs of bushes, like a young Sparrow.

Oriolus kundoo. Springs into the air after flies.

Ardea (Buphus) coromanda. In winter, in plain white plumage.

Copsychus saularis, L. Common about houses.

I observed many other birds, whose names I do not insert, as I have nothing special to report of them. I would draw attention to the similarity of the notes of many species of a genus, especially of the *representative* species, in Bombay, Ceylon, Singapore, and China, chiefly in such genera as *Acridotheres*, *Ixos*,

Orthotomus, *Prinia*, &c.; so much so, that on hearing the note, without seeing the bird, I could frequently pronounce with certainty the *genus*, from my acquaintance with the allied species in China, though I had never noted the particular species before. The same may be said of their relative habits. In fact, the more nearly connected the form, usually the more similar the notes. The same may be said of the birds of the Formosan Mountains. What Jerdon relates of certain Himalayan species, as to the height they mostly affect, their habits, nesting, and song, would apply equally well to the Formosan representatives of the several forms, though they have changed somewhat in the distribution of their tints. On this subject I shall probably have a few more words to offer, as also on some interesting facts relating to migration, in a notice on Jerdon's 'Birds of India,' as bearing on the birds of China, which I purpose, at a future date, to draw up at my leisure.

On the 14th we left Bombay, and coasted along off the Carnatic. On the 15th it was calm: a Reed-bird (*Calamoherpe dumetorum*) came on board. 19th, squalls off land, accompanied with rain. Birds blown off to the ship—several *Budytes viridis* in winter plumage, a small *Anthus*, a few *Tringa cinclus* and *Hiaticula cantiana*, and one *Gallinula phœnicura*. These perched about the rigging and awning all day. The *Budytes* were very tame, running about the decks, catching flies. They had grey heads; the finest male, with a light sulphur breast, having a short white mark over and under the eye. At evening two Falcons (*F. asalon*) made their appearance. It was then calm. One of them seized a *Budytes* and the other a *Tringa*; and, carrying their prey boldly on to the yards, devoured them, showering the feathers about in all directions.

November 23rd, Galle. I spent a fortnight in Ceylon, during which time I visited Colombo and Kandy, and other neighbouring places; but my motions from place to place were so hurried, that I made few notes on birds. In this evergreen isle, with its jungles and endless groves of cocoa-nut trees, reptiles appear to constitute the chief class of Vertebrata. Lizards, of a great variety of species, were especially abundant. Along the main road from Galle to Colombo, through avenues of cocoa-nuts,

birds were scarce. I frequently heard the Crow-Pheasant (*Centropus rufipennis*), and the loud metallic sound (*Ka-tock*) of the Coppersmith (*Megalama*, sp.). *Corvus splendens* was abundant about towns; *C. culminatus* about detached huts. At Galle, in the evening, large parties of a species of *Merops* would be seen at sunset, hawking about at some height in the air after flies, much as *Libellulæ* (Dragon-flies) usually do. Kandy is so cleared—in most places right to the top of the hills—for the plantation of the coffee-plant, that it is difficult to find a bit of primitive jungle. I climbed to a small patch of forest on the top of a hill 5000 feet above the sea-level. A pair of Jungle-fowl, with a peculiar Pheasant-like cry, flapped heavily across the brake, from one copse to another. The jungle in this exposed situation consisted of poor stunted trees and scattered underwood, damp everywhere underfoot, the ground being composed of layers of saturated dead leaves; pools of water frequently occurred right in one's beaten path, from which there was seldom any deviating. The silence was broken occasionally by the rustling of the branches, or the shrieking cry of some noisy bird. A chilly feeling crept over me, and caused me to shudder involuntarily. I found two species of orchids on the trunks of trees. I did not see any monkeys; but frequent marks of them occurred in the shape of small parcels of coffee-beans, which lay about on the stones and fallen timber. The monkeys come down to the plantations in small troops; and, filling their pouches with the coffee-cherries, run up again to the hills, where they squat on prominent places, and drop the seeds, while they eat the pulp.

A curious instance of plant-usurpation occurs on a large scale at Ceylon. A small bushy plant, with small clusters of orange flowers, called the *Lantana mixta*, was introduced into the country about eleven years ago from Brazil. It has run wild, and lines for miles the roadsides in thick hedges, occurring also up the highest hills. Wherever it goes, it seems to paralyse the plant-life. In Penang and Singapore I also noted it very frequently. In Ceylon and the two other colonies the Australian Pine (*Casuarina equisetifolia*) has also been naturalized, forming a very conspicuous and beautiful object in gardens. It is frequently covered with several species of ferns. About the

wilder parts of Ceylon, near Kandy, I noted several interesting birds; among others, *Pitta brachyura*, *Chalcophaps indica*, *Palæornis calthropæ*, and *Hirundo hyperythra*, Layard. The two last are, I believe, peculiar to the Kandian district. The Red-breasted Swallows bear to *H. daürica* the same relationship that *H. catirica* of Cairo does to *H. domestica*. In habits and notes they are very similar to their ally. I also saw the *Lanius lucionensis* of Ceylon. It uttered the same chattering note as our Chinese bird.

At Colombo there is an Asiatic Society, which makes reports and corresponds with the mother institution at home and the various branch institutions abroad. I sought for its museum. One small room held library, museum, and other belongings of the Society. There were a few books, a few specimens of manufactures, a few rocks and fossils, a very few reptiles and fishes in bottles in poor condition, a few wretched mammals, and a few dozen dreadful specimens of birds. I looked through the whole of the latter, most of which were moth-eaten and tumbling to pieces. Numbers of them bore paper labels in Blyth's well-known handwriting. Among them I discovered one that interested me; it was a specimen of *Tringa albescent*, Temm., with reddish on the back and a little on the breast. It was labelled *T. minuta*, with which last species both this and the *T. damacensis* appear long to have been confounded. *T. damacensis*, Horsf. (*T. subminuta*, Midd.), we have shown to be a regular winter visitant to the east coast of India; and the discovery of this specimen proves that to Ceylon at least this little North-China bird extends its winter wanderings. I turned from this museum in disgust, and asked the peon (porter) to show me the other, or Military Medical Museum, of which he also had charge. He led me to the back of one of the chief streets, and, through a strong door, conducted me into a place which must have served the Dutch for a prison in former days. The museum was contained in two rooms, one placed at right angles to the other, in a T-form. The collection here was much finer, but sadly neglected. There was a goodly series of well-prepared skeletons, especially of mammals, a skull and part skeleton of a *Balenoptera* (Rorqual Whale), and a large entire

skeleton of the Ceylonese Elephant. In this last I counted one cervical, twenty-five dorsal and lumbar, four sacral (anchylosed), and twenty-five caudal vertebræ. A skeleton of quite a young Elephant had a similar number of vertebræ. The specimens of birds were few, from various parts of the world, Australia, America, &c. Most of them were labelled "External form of ———," and too frequently wrongly named. There were, besides, some unidentified fish and snakes in bottles, with a few preparations of diseased parts of the human body; and also a small collection of shells and stones.

The general formation of Ceylon, about Kandy, appears to be limestone, with more or less quartz, the latter often speckled with pink of different shades, and sometimes with blue. Large quantities of iron-pyrites also occur. In Colombo and Galle a kind of rock, locally called *cabook*, is everywhere found. It looks like a conglomerate of clay, hardened by the percolation of water saturated with iron, full of holes, depressions, and irregularities. It occurs at no great depth below the superincumbent soft clay, and is used for building purposes at the two mentioned towns, where the Kandian limestone does not occur. At Bombay the formation appears to be trappean.

Dec. 12th. Reached Penang, and went, as is customary, to the Waterfall. The rocks here are large black boulders of granite, much as on the coast of South China, lying on reddish gravel and clay. The trees are of much the same character as at Ceylon, but more covered with ferns. In many gardens the *Casuarina equisetifolia* of Australia has attained a very large size, their trunks being overrun with *Drymoglossum* and other ferns. The cinnamon-tree has been almost entirely destroyed, as at Singapore—it is said, by a worm. I startled from the top of the waterfall a fine Sea-Eagle with white feet and tail. The Sensitive Plant grows here as a weed, as also at Ceylon and Singapore. A few Swallows (*Hirundo gutturalis*), some Swifts (*Cypselus subfurcatus*, Blyth), a Magpie-Robin or two (*Copsychus mindanensis*), with its familiar habits and notes, very similar to those of *C. saularis* and a *Chalcophaps indica*, were all the birds I observed in this trip. By the way, in speaking of *Copsychus*, it is well to note here, that both Gould (Birds of Asia) and

Jerdon (Birds of India) set down the South-China species as *C. mindanensis*, whereas Blyth and I have repeatedly shown that it is the true *C. saularis* *. We passed many gardens where the betel-leaf plant was trained on poles, like hops, for the sake of its leaf. Areca-palms were abundant, as also cocoa-nuts and the red-fruited King Cocoa-nut.

We moved out of Penang harbour at night. The sky was cloudless, with a very young crescent moon. It was warm, and the dark water wonderfully phosphorescent. The fish, as they darted about, gleamed like meteors; and as they leapt and fell again into the element, the drops were showered round like sparks, succeeded by expanding rings of silver light.

Dec. 14th, Singapore. Visited the Botanical Gardens—quite a charming spot; in fact, an English garden, with roses and other flowers placed by enchantment, as it were, on the outskirts of a primitive forest. A small party of *Budytes melanotis* were feeding on the grass-plot. They were in winter plumage, yet their dark ears at once identified them. The island of Singapore is only moderately undulated, the chief rock being granite-boulders; but near the side-harbour I observed an outcropping mass of finely laminated sandstone.

On our way up the China Sea we took what is called the Palawan passage, to escape the strength of the north-east or winter monsoon. We sighted the coast of the north end of Borneo. Dec. 17th, a *Hiaticula cantiana* flew about the ship. Several large white-bellied Gannets (*Sula*) floated past on a log. One continued till late, flying about the ship. A shoal of fish observed jumping ahead of the vessel, with a large flight of big Terns (*Sterna caspia*?) hovering over them. Sea calm, smooth, and lead-coloured, with a heavy swell. Flying-fish numerous. Dec. 19th, a Noddy (*Anous stolidus*) perched on the ship at night, and was caught. The Noddy was a male; irides rich brown; the bronchi were long, and broader than the trachea, but of simple form; the œsophagus expands before reaching the

* The female of the Ceylonese *Copsychus* differs as much from the male as ours. Upon what differences then, is the *C. brevirostris* separated as a distinct species? Gould and Layard, I find, both very properly unite it to *C. saularis*.

proventriculus, which was $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. long, and ended in a small heart-shaped stomach about $\frac{3}{4}$ in. long. The stomach contained remains of the soft part of Crustacea. The cæca were about $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. long, terminating in long blank sacs, and given off about $\frac{3}{4}$ in. from anus. Testes small and black.

Dec. 22nd. Stood across from Luzon for China. Within sight of Cape Boleno two birds, about the size of White Pigeons, which they somewhat resembled, came near us. They were heavy-looking, with short tails and heavy bill and head. Entire plumage white. Could they have been *Gygis candida* of Australia?

In the Hongkong bird-shops I saw in cages the *Garrulax chinensis*, Scop. (*Corvus auritus*; see Blyth's Catalogue, p. 95). This bird I have omitted from my list of China birds published in the 'Proceedings of the Zoological Society.' I have never met with it wild, and I therefore fancy its range is south of Canton. It is a much larger bird than our large *G. perspicillatus*.

At Amoy I found a female *Fringilla montifringilla* in a cage. A friend of mine had caught it in December, fluttering against a window in his house. This is the most southerly appearance of this bird on the China coast.

Between Amoy and Foochow I saw several Albatroses (*Diomedea brachyura* of Temm.) in January. Pallas mentions this bird as visiting Kamtschatka (see Zoograph. Ross.-Asiat. ii. p. 308), under the name of *Diomedea albatros*, which name should consequently take priority over *D. brachyura* of Temminck.

On 31st January I reached Tamsuy, Formosa.

Yours &c.,

ROBERT SWINHOE.

Formosa, April 4th, 1864.

SIR,—I have received from my friends Messrs. Caine and Cooper, of the British Consulate at Swatow, a very interesting new form of *Hypsipetes*, which I think it my duty to at once describe through your friendly columns. The bird was shot by Count Caine near Swatow, on the northern borders of the Kwangtung Province, just south of the Fokien Province, in which latter Amoy and Foochow are situated. It was skinned and forwarded to me by Mr. Cooper.

HYPSSIPETES NIVEICEPS, sp. nov. *Æneo-niger*: capite usque ad pectus cum scapularium abdominalium subcaudaliumque marginibus niveis: alis caudaque saturate fuscis: rostro corallino: pedibus rubro-aurantiacis. Long. 9·7 poll., alæ 4·7, caudæ 4, tarsi 7, rostri 9, rostr. ad rictum 1·25.

Rictal bristles white; 1st quill short; 4th 1 in. longer than 3rd, slightly longer than 5th, and longest in the wing. Tail of twelve feathers, inclining outwardly, and giving to that organ, when expanded, a triangular form; the rectrices with mucronate tips.

This is the first species of the black *Hypsipetes* group, with red bill and legs, procured in China. To this form, but more nearly allied to the Indian races, belongs our Formosan *H. nigerrimus*, Gould. From this last the Swatow bird, besides in having a white head, differs in some remarkable particulars. It is larger, and has a smaller bill, more suddenly dilated at the base, and with the gonys ascending towards the rictus, giving a somewhat Sturnine appearance to that organ. The feathers of the back are more regularly defined, and reflect a bluer bronze. The wings are unicolour, hair-brown. The legs have shorter tarsi and toes; and the claws are orange, instead of black. The wing is of nearly similar form, the same feather being the longest; but the 3rd and 4th are more nearly of a length than in *H. niger-rimus*. The tail is more expanded.

If this species turn out to be the sole representative of the black *Hypsipetes* form in South China, it will introduce a new topic of inquiry as to why the Formosan type should approach so near to the Indian races, while in the intermediate locality of South China the group is represented by so divergent a species.

I also, at the same time, received from Swatow a male Kestrel, only sparsely spotted with black on the mantle. Of this I had before procured an example from Amoy, which Mr. Gurney now has, and which, I believe, that gentleman considers only a casual variety of the largely and deeply spotted Japanese race (*Tinnunculus japonicus*), which is the prevailing species at Amoy. I strongly suspect, however, that the sparsely spotted form will eventually prove to be a straggler from some area in South China, where it will be found to predominate. In such case, as a

permanent race it will be entitled to a distinguishing specific name.

Yours &c., ROBERT SWINHOE.

Tamsuy, Formosa, April 30th, 1864.

About the middle of the month, four Partridges were brought to me from the interior mountains, alive, consisting of three males and one female. They uttered a chuckle very like that of the Guinea-hen (*Numida*). I tried my best to induce them to live; but they knocked themselves about, and one after the other succumbed. Besides their peculiar red unspurred legs, thick black bill, and very short tail, the most striking peculiarity was in their all having an ugly raw-looking red patch on the throat. I thought it curious that *all* the birds should be so injured, if the peculiarity arose from an injury; but, on examining them closely, I found that the bare throat was natural. I have been puzzling myself as to what genus to assign them, but I know of no group of Partridges to which they can be well referred. They are not *Arboricolæ*, for they are of a different type, and, from their straight claws, certainly non-perching birds. They approach nearest the genus *Caccabis*; but from these they differ in the unspurred leg, the short tail, and the thick bill. Therefore, though loth to multiply genera, I see no hope of avoiding it in this case; and, from their being denizens of the interior mountains, I propose to create for them the genus which I will proceed to define.

OREOPERDIX, n. gen. Bill thick and heavy, tending to that of *Numida*; nostrils covered in most part by a bulging opercular skin. Legs large; tarse longer than middle toe; claws long, straightish, and blunt; outer toe longer than inner, both attached by a membrane to the middle toe as far as second joint, and extending in a narrow fringe up greater part of the toe; hind toe on a level with the rest, and attached to the inner toe by a basal web. Wing concave, of moderate length; 4th and 5th remiges longest. Tail soft and very short, of 14 rectrices. Throat in typical species inflamed (in spring) and much denuded. Sexes of similar plumage; but female much smaller, with thinner and lighter bill and legs.

OREOPERDIX CRUDIGULARIS, n. sp.

Line round the eyes, above the ear-coverts, extending broader across throat, black. Black feathers on throat few and scattered, exhibiting a raw-looking red patch. This appears to be the work of the inflamed and expanded state of the numerous small arteries under the skin, and not due to pigment-colouring; and the feathers on that account lose their hold and fall away, as it is not of equal extent in all the individuals. This inflamed state of the throat has probably some connexion with the excited nature of the bird at the spring or breeding-season; and it is not unlikely that in winter the redness does not exist and the feathers do not fall off. Before the eyes, chin, and cheeks, under-neck and fringing the black line to over the eye, belly, and sides yellowish white, the yellowish fringe and the black neck-line having most of the feathers tipped with black. Forehead, breast, and under parts smoke-grey, tinged with olive, streaked centrally on the flanks and lower breast, and margined on the vent and parts of the axillaries with yellowish white. Occiput and back of nape reddish brown, tipped with black. Upper parts brownish olive, with several roundish bars on each feather of black, spotted and mottled as well with the same on the wing-coverts and scapularies, which are also splashed with reddish brown. Quills deep brown, margined with mottled reddish brown. Tail same as back, but the black bars somewhat irregular. Bill black. Irides olive-brown; bare skin round eye purplish flesh-colour. Inside of mouth flesh-colour. Legs light red; under-tarse, soles, and claws dingier.

♂. Length 11 in.; wing 5·6 in., rounded fourth quill slightly longer than fifth, and longest. Tail soft, 2·4 in. long, of fourteen feathers, bulging, and somewhat graduated, giving a rounded form to the tail when expanded. Tarse 1·8 in.; mid-toe 1·5 in.; its claw 6 in. Bill, along culmen, ·85 in.; from gape 1·1 in.; depth at base ·4 in.

♀. Similar in colouring to the male, but smaller, with slighter legs, feet, and bill. Length 8·5 in.; wing 5·2 in.; tail 2 in. Tarse 1·5 in.; mid-toe 1·3 in.; its claw 4 in. Bill, along culmen, ·85 in.; from gape 1·1 in.; depth at base ·3 in.

The only two other birds procured, of special interest, are a Waxwing (*Ampelis phanicoptera*) and a *Ninox japonicus*. The former new to the Formosan fauna, and, I presume, only an accidental visitor; the latter only observed before, and not procured.

Yours &c.,

ROBERT SWINHOE.

Tamsuy, Formosa, June 2nd, 1864.

SIR,—I have before observed that the Black Crow (*Corvus sinensis*, Gould) in the south of China is *locally* distributed. At Swatow it is common; at Amoy it gives place to the white-ringed *C. pectoralis*, Gould; and at Foochow it is scarce, but still holds its ground with the White-neck. At Peking it is *the* Crow, *C. pectoralis* being there a somewhat rare bird. In Formosa the Black Crow is *extremely* wild, and restricted to the hills. About the plains of Taiwanfoo I never saw it, nor does it occur in the immediate neighbourhood of this place. Among the wooded hills further up this river it is frequently seen; and I found a pair breeding on the south shore of the river, in a well-wooded valley about seven miles distant from here. I only succeeded in securing a nearly fledged young bird. But on a recent visit to Sawo Harbour, on the east side, I was pleased to fall in with two pairs, and succeeded in securing a male, and, from its appearance, I think there is good reason to consider it a peculiar species. The noisy and singular cries of this bird are very similar to those of the Chinese species. I have before commented on the superstitious reverence for this bird shown by the Chinese colonists, and the fruitless attempts I have made to urge them to bring me specimens. I therefore propose to specify it as the

CORVUS COLONORUM, n. sp. ♂. Length 34·5 in. Wing 14·3 in.; first quill 3·7 in. shorter than second, which is 1·3 in. shorter than third, which is nearly equal to fifth, and about ·25 in. shorter than fourth—the longest in the wing; the primaries all narrow towards their tips. Tail 9·3 in., nearly equally graduated, the outer feather being 1·2 in. shorter than the longest; all the rectrices obtusely ended, their shafts being curved inwardly. Bill along culmen 2·6 in.; greatest depth 1 in. Tarse 1·3 in.

Irides deep hazel-brown. The feathers of the throat are rounded, and not lanceolate as in *C. sinensis*. Occiput and hind-neck greyish black, tinged with olive. Lower parts obscurely shot with green; upper parts with green and purple, the latter colour chiefly on the wings.

Another novelty of much interest is a new *Pitta*, of which I received a specimen from the Formosan Mountains on the 16th May. It is allied to *Pitta cyanoptera* and *P. nympha*. From the former it can at once be distinguished by its reddish crown and light under parts, and from the latter by the colour of its crown and the want of the black chin. It may be described as follows:—

PITTA OREAS, n. sp. Crown dull reddish brown; eye-streak full and long, yellow-ochre; median coronal streak, and stripe from base of bill, under ear-coverts to back of neck, and entire hind-neck black. Back and scapulars green, as in *P. brachyura*; shoulder-spot and upper tail-coverts fine verditer blue; wing-coverts and tertiary quills green, more or less bluish, with more or less black on their inner webs; quills and tail black, a white spot on the former occupying portions of the first seven quills; the tenth quill slightly edged at the tip with bluish, the rest towards the tertiaries broadly edged on a good part of the outer web with bluish green. Throat and under-neck white, with a tinge of ochre. Under parts pale ochreous, washed with green on the flanks; centre of belly, from breast downwards, and whole of under tail-coverts fine carmine. Axillaries black; under shoulder-edge greenish blue. Bill black; legs and claws light flesh-colour.

Length 8 inches; wing 5 in.; tail 1·8 in. Bill, along culmen, 1 in.; to gape 1·2 in.; depth at base ·35 in. Tarse 1·6 in.

Yours &c.,

ROBERT SWINHOE.

Mr. J. H. Gurney sends us the following extract of a letter from Mr. Swinhoe, dated Formosa, 8th March, 1864:—

“ I have succeeded in procuring another fine specimen of the Owl described in the ‘ Ibis,’ 1864, p. 218, under the name of

Bubo caligatus, in which I can detect no horns; but I find that the feathers of the hind-neck are long and loose, some of those on one side especially so, and I consequently imagine that in the bird described in the 'Ibis' the native stuffer must have pushed the skin up over the ears, so as to give to the specimen the appearance of horns. The species may yet prove to be *Syrnium indranee*. I subjoin a note on the individual last procured.

"*Syrnium caligatum*, ♀, 21st February, 1864. Bill pale yellowish white, tinged with blue (the blue tint being evanescent), deepening into indigo near its base; claws deep brown on rather more than the apical half, passing into dingy white towards their bases. Length 20 in.; tail $10\frac{1}{2}$ in., of twelve feathers somewhat graduated; wing $15\frac{3}{4}$ in., the fifth quill rather the longest.

"I received from the interior, at the same date, a specimen, new to the Formosan avifauna, of *Buteo poliogenys*, Schlegel. Bill blue-black, pale on the gonys and lower portion of base of upper mandible; cere and over the eye dull olive-green; eyelids and commissure-angle gamboge; legs and toes of a deep rich chrome-yellow; claws black, more or less patched with pale brown, chiefly about their middle portions; upper portion of the tibia feathered. Total length $16\frac{1}{2}$ in.; tail 9 in., of twelve even feathers, obtuse at the ends, and somewhat graduated outwardly, so as to give the tail a rounded appearance when expanded; wing $9\frac{1}{4}$ in., the fourth and fifth quills equal and longest. Tomiæ of bill with a single deep festoon on each side.

"Appearance of bird, between Buzzard and Sparrow-Hawk; so that Hodgson's generic name *Butastur* is very aptly applied to it. Some feathers of the hind head long and subacuminate, forming a crest protruding about half an inch."

We regret to find some errors in the article on the Nesting of the Lanner Falcon in Egypt, in the last Number of the 'Ibis.'

The Egyptian and North-African Falcon, which is identical with *Falco feldeggii*, is not *Falco sacer*, but *Falco lanarius*, Schlegel.

Falco tanypterus, Licht., from Abyssinia, as we are informed

by Mr. Gurney, differs in no degree in size from *Falco lanarius*, Schlegel, but only in the deeper and richer tints of its plumage.

The egg figured in Pl. IV. fig. 2. is supposed by Mr. Cochrane to belong probably to *Falco barbarus*, and not to *Falco lanarius*.

At the same time Dr. A. Leith Adams wishes us to notice that, in his paper on the Birds of Egypt (*anteà*, p. 22), he has in two places, under the head of *Corvus cornix*, misnamed the bird, and substituted Carrion Crow for Hooded Crow.

Dr. G. Hartlaub kindly sends us the following note of Th. v. Heuglin on his newly discovered Stork, *Ciconia pruyssenaëri*:—

“This bird is nearly allied in colouring to *Ciconia leucocephala*, but differs in its darkly coloured sinciput, in the more greenish-black hue of its plumage, and especially in the extraordinary form of its tail. *All* the rectrices are greenish black, and narrower towards their points; the furcation of the tail is very deep, and the under tail-coverts pass much beyond it. The strong straight beak and the tarsi are proportionally shorter than in *C. leucocephala*, the apex of the former being *very little* bent upwards; part of the head and neck (the basal part excepted) is thickly covered with a soft white lanugo and a violet-blue skin; about the ears nearly naked. Upper head brownish black, with some greenish metallic gloss; the tips of the feathers with whitish spots. Under parts of the body, from the base of the neck downwards, greenish black; scapulars and the broad long pectoral feathers with a beautiful purple gloss; under tail-coverts, crissum, and medial abdomen white; tibiæ externally blackish, internally whitish; beak of a dirty red, and blackish at the base; feet of a paler red; iris light brown; eyelids of a light violet.

“The Stork is not very rare in the dried-up marshes of the Regnegroes, from January to May, being mostly found in company with *Grus pavonina*.”